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The Evolving Meaning of Supervision in the Changing Scholarly Context

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Title: The Evolving Meaning of Supervision in the Changing Scholarly Context

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Abstract:

Despite the growing literature that examines supervision and the importance of relationships between the supervisor and the postgraduate student, our understanding of these relationships is still limited, particularly from a cultural aspect (Trudgett, 2014). In examining the resources on thesis writing and doctoral supervision, Dedrick and Watson (2002) highlighted the scarcity of discussion on the needs of female, minority, and international students. Johnson-Bailey (2004) echoes a similar concern, when she argues that women and people of colour are rarely considered in higher education contexts. Set against the framework of today's competitive research environment, this paper focuses on the meaning-making of a contemporary doctoral supervision relationship in Anglo-Saxon academe, underpinned by two major aspects of identity: gender and ethnicity.

This work will be presented at the conference as a dialogue, as we situate ourselves within our intellectual socialization context of tourism research. This context refers to the community of tourism researchers, of which we have been, and are being, socialized (Hall, 2004). In this context, we are two Asian women in a supervisor-supervisee relationship. Our relationship, not uncommon from many, began from a project for a Master's dissertation in a Malaysian institution. The opportunity for an academic position, and serendipitously, a doctoral scholarship in Australia, meant we were both able to continue working together in a new institution.

Arising from duo-ethnographic journal entries and subsequent conversations about these narratives, our 'data' is presented as reflexive considerations on the themes raised by previous scholars on the challenges that exist in supervisory relationships, which include personal (e.g., expectation and communication gaps), gender (e.g., sexism, implicit bias, and work-family balance), and structural (e.g., institutional structure and power distance/negotiation) dimensions (Brown & Watson, 2010; Deuchar, 2008; Hemer, 2012). In these conversations, we critique the existing discourse on supervision by providing specific experiences through a feminist lens that acknowledge vulnerability, weakness, and emotion. With the current international push for universities to increase the numbers of doctoral completions (Askew et al., 2016), this study is timely in adding to our current knowledge the success factors in doctoral supervisions at different stages of candidature, particularly when at least one person in the relationship is a female and/or of a minority ethnic background.

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